



GOVERNOR'S P-20 COUNCIL

HIGHER EDUCATION AD HOC COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

In order for the state to be globally competitive, recent data has shown that it is imperative that Arizona must significantly increase the number of bachelor's degrees awarded in the state by developing mechanisms to increase the number of students who qualify and have access to higher education, transfer from community colleges to universities, and ultimately graduate with a degree.

Specifically, Governor Napolitano has asked the universities and community colleges to work together to double the number of bachelor's degrees by 2020. To accomplish this, a number of strategies must be considered including: expanding collaborative delivery models, easing the transfer of courses among institutions, communicating effectively to students, creating mechanisms to receive feedback from students, providing increased access to advising resources, developing effective funding models, and creating a longitudinal data system.

There are a number of challenges associated with these strategies, including appropriate funding models that better support strategic goals, governance structure that enables coordination system wide, determining and sustaining student demand, establishing university presence and advising throughout the state, and establishing criteria to make market based decisions regarding degree programs, among others.

Funding

Underlying the success of all of these initiatives is funding. Specifically, a revised funding mechanism is needed in order to achieve the shared goals above that will increase the number of degrees and improve productivity by (1) increasing the number of students in rural Arizona with access to a university degree; (2) increasing the number of students who transfer from two-year institutions to four-year intuitions; and (3) meeting local workforce demands, particularly in highly technical, applied areas that increasingly require additional coursework beyond traditional two-year degrees.

1. Establish a P-20 working group and include legislative leaders, community colleges, and universities to review and revise state funding models to increase productivity and better meet specific goals including: increasing access to rural delivery, expanding the number of community college transfers, supporting mission differentiation, and other key areas, such as producing degrees in occupations that are in high demand and collaboration among institutions, by October 2008.¹

¹ ABOR is currently reviewing funding as a part of its strategic planning process. Additionally, the Lumina Foundation for Education selected Arizona as one of eleven states to develop a work plan to increase productivity in the state's university system. This will include a significant review of the current university formula funding. Arizona may be one of five states to receive up to \$2 million for implementation of this plan.

2. Community Colleges and universities should consider expanding student financial aid options that support alignment from high school through college and increase expectations for students to get a college degree. This could include student-centered options for transfer students.
3. Identify a source of funds to encourage the development of new partnerships and incentives for universities and community colleges to collaborate and set appropriate guidelines.

Delivery Models

A number of delivery options are needed to increase degree production in the state. These may include university centers, hybrid four-year institutions, the provision of limited bachelor's degrees at community colleges, and 2+2 (and other similar) agreements. The development of these models is currently happening on an institution-by-institution basis. While recent program partnerships have increased, broad system-wide collaboration is lacking that will ultimately increase options for students to complete a bachelor's degree more efficiently, beginning at a community college or high school, through dual enrollment.²

4. Establish necessary policies and incentives to encourage the development of new "hybrid" institution models that include a seamless joint admissions process, joint advising and career planning, joint admissions centers and shared student support services that allow students to move smoothly from a community college to a university. Consideration should be given to expansion of these models on a system wide basis. Ensure an appropriate funding mechanism and develop appropriate incentives for this delivery model. Develop common measures that can be used to demonstrate the effectiveness of this model.
5. University Centers are a concept worth exploring in some circumstances.³ Some have been established in the state, however there are a number of issues that need to be addressed to make them more viable, including: size and location of the population base, number of working adults, ability to be sustainable, governance structure, non-compete clauses for participating universities, and funding. The JCC, with input from the ten community college districts, should review the management of university centers and recommend a structure for these partnerships. Funding for university centers should be included in the funding model review, as recommended on page one of this document.
6. Expand delivery models of postsecondary education that provide opportunity for non-traditional students to complete their degree and to make better use of existing resources (e.g. courses online, at night and on weekends). Consideration should be given to ensure that a revised funding model includes these efforts.
7. Implement collaborative agreements on a system wide basis, including 2+2+2, 2+2 and 3+1 agreements and other innovative partnerships among higher education institutions in order to increase access to baccalaureate degrees in the state.

² Currently, the P-20 Pathways Committee is exploring options for increasing access to dual enrollment and other early college options.

³ In Arizona, university centers have been underutilized due to the same financial issues that prevent public and private universities from delivering programs where low student demand exists.

8. Ask the Joint Conference Committee (JCC) to provide a comprehensive review of the collaborative partnerships that currently exist between institutions (providers, degrees offered, partnerships, etc.), expanding on the information that ABOR and the P-20 Council have compiled. Further action should be taken to communicate these options more effectively to students and advisors through a number of mechanisms, including featuring this information on the state's transfer web site (aztransfer.com) and on individual institutional web sites.
9. Technological options should be considered as a part of the solution, especially to reach non-traditional students and those who may have limited geographic access to a university. A concentrated effort should also be focused on delivery models that remove these and other barriers that students encounter while working to obtain a degree.

Delivery Models - Pathway for Baccalaureate Degrees at Community Colleges

10. To meet the needs of a growing student population and support evolving workforce needs in communities with limited access to universities, the committee recommends that the P-20 Council adopt the JCC's, Recommendation #5 to "Develop a Pathway for Baccalaureate Degrees at Community Colleges," and recommends the following to enhance the process that the JCC has proposed:⁴
 - a. Include all 10 community college districts, rather than just those that are members of the Arizona Community College Association, in order to be fully inclusive of each community college, as well as private and Tribal higher education institutions. The JCC, with input from non-JCC member stakeholders, should determine a process to review the criteria and process with each of these entities.
 - b. Fully define the appropriate criteria under which a community college would qualify to provide a baccalaureate degree in the next 30 days (e.g. student demand, workforce demand).
11. The JCC should pilot the proposed process, including the above revisions. It is recommended that Pima Community College, and possibly a rural community college, serve as the lead on this pilot study, with support from other institutions. This pilot study should be completed no later than October 2008.
12. The P-20 Council will work in conjunction with the JCC to determine what legislative changes are necessary to support the implementation of Recommendation #5 and the appropriate governance structure for these agreements. The P-20 Council will review potential statutory changes no later than October 2008.
13. A JCC-type entity should be established with explicit authority to:
 - a. Make determinations as to when a community college may provide a baccalaureate degree.
 - b. Identify and implement additional legislative changes needed to implement Recommendation #5.

⁴ It is suggested that Recommendation #5 be adopted, however the P-20 Council is not being asked at this time to approve the specific process or criteria that would develop a pathway for baccalaureate degrees at community colleges. Rather, the JCC will finalize the process and determine criteria that are inclusive of input from interested public, private, and Tribal higher education institutions. The P20 Council anticipates further discussion relating to any final legislative or other action as deemed appropriate or necessary.

- c. The P-20 Council should also consider recommending that this authority serve as a coordinating point for higher education in the state, to provide system-wide cohesiveness to outreach/marketing, data collection and reporting, direct policies to enhance transfer and articulation, and provide a single source of information for financial aid.

14. For Further Consideration:

- a. Conduct an independent analysis by October 2008 to answer the following questions:
 - What is the price point at which it is not economically feasible for a publicly funded university to provide educational services to a rural area? Consider various delivery models (face to face, ITV, web, etc.) and existing infrastructure in this analysis.
 - What is the appropriate level of student and community demand needed to sustain enrollments over time? How will this be determined?
 - Model key performance data points to demonstrate the ability of various delivery models (university centers, expanded degree options, etc.) to raise key performance measures (e.g. number of students who transfer).
 - How will collaborative partnerships and delivery models be funded? Should they be funded separately from current models in use? What is the differential cost to the state, as compared to the current funding model?
 - Technology plays an important role in reaching working adult students and students in rural areas, among others. How can the role and use of technology be expanded to serve a greater number of students with a greater number of degree programs, while providing “high touch” student support elements?
- b. What is the capacity of higher education institutions to accommodate students in high demand fields? Is this limiting good students from enrolling or transferring to a university?
- c. How prevalent is the occurrence that students in rural areas are required to take courses on a university campus? How does this impact their ability to attain a degree?

Communications and Student Input

Key to the success of any delivery model or transfer system is communication to students and families. Students must be made aware of and have access to information regarding college options, financial aid resources, the ability of their courses to transfer, and the general value of earning a degree in a user friendly manner. To this end, the JCC and Academic Program Articulation Steering Committee (APASC) have recently developed an informational video for high school students to show a clear pathway to earn a degree and promote the Arizona General Education Curriculum (AGEC). These committees are also working to redesign the state transfer web site to make it more student friendly. Both are commendable efforts, however the complicated nature of the transfer system persists and efforts to increase access to this information are plausible, but require additional coordination.

- 15. Communicate the value and importance of obtaining a degree by including this as a marketing effort within the P-20 Council’s collaborative communications campaign and the Arizona Board of Regents Solutions Through Higher Education campaign.

- a. Additionally, engage in marketing and communications efforts to (1) encourage students to go to college, (2) continue to their degree, (3) engage adults who have stopped out, (4) increase student awareness of higher education options, and (5) increase understanding that affording a college education is possible. Create a mechanism to allow ongoing student input for continuous improvement.
 - b. These efforts should be undertaken through the JCC, Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education, and P-20 Council Communications Committee, with consideration given to a more permanent structure that enables coordinated outreach and ongoing review of content.
16. Aggressively market the AGECEC and its benefits to students. Ask APASC to develop a marketing plan for the AGECEC in coordination with the JCC and Governor's P-20 Council. Consideration should be given to communicating the benefits of completing an AGECEC at a single institution.
17. Increase communications to students regarding the transfer of the courses that they have or will take in the future.
- a. Enhance online tools to be more student friendly and to increase their ease of use. Strongly encourage the inclusion of student input in the redesign of the state's transfer system web site.
 - b. Feature transfer information prominently on community college, university, Education Career and Action Plan, and other related web pages.
18. Create a mechanism to allow ongoing student input for continuous improvement throughout the public higher education system.
19. Consider a single point of contact and structure on all higher education system information in the state of Arizona that will better coordinate outreach and communications activities throughout the state.

Transfer & Articulation

The seamless movement of students from institution to institution is important in reducing a student's total time to earn a degree, the total cost of that degree to students and families, and the cost to the state. With increased student swirling among institutions, this effort is also important to ensure that students attain bachelor's degrees. In addition to improving efficiencies in transfer and articulation, it is also critical to increase student understanding of how classes transfer among institutions. Creating easily understandable systems and tools is important in accomplishing this goal.

20. Direct APASC to implement common course numbering beginning with the 51 most commonly attended classes within six months, with potential to expand to include all AGECEC courses. Study other states' work to better understand cost, time, and potential impact of this work (e.g. Texas, California, Washington, Colorado).

21. Establish a university staff presence or transfer center at each community college district in the state, where appropriate. Determine the appropriate funding model and cost to implement this, based on the needs of the higher education system. This may be a potential funding request for FY 2010.
22. Direct the universities, in collaboration with community colleges, to establish articulated pathways, with supporting policies and practices to guarantee a degree pathway, especially in high-demand areas, that ensures a student's admission into a university degree program (subject to capacity) with a student's successful completion of a specified AGECE or associate's degree, and GPA.
23. The completion of an AGECE should be listed in the same manner on student transcripts, regardless of institution. The community colleges should work together to determine a common way to identify the completion of an AGECE on a student's transcript. Additionally, an AGECE should receive automatic designation on a student's transcript to further facilitate the complete transfer of the AGECE.
24. Determine the best mechanism for facilitating the collaboration of university, community college and high school faculty representatives to better align and articulate secondary and postsecondary education. One option is to invite high school faculty to relevant discussions held by specific Articulation Task Forces (ATF) (General Education, Advising, and other Discipline Specific ATF's).
25. Implement the reverse transfer of credit system wide for a student to obtain an associate's degree once he has matriculated to a state university. This would benefit the student by providing another accomplishment and the community college by more accurately reflecting community college completion rates. The issue of data reporting and data sharing will need to be further resolved, as will the potential of students to utilize of this opportunity.
26. Further study the issue of transfer of credit between regionally and nationally accredited higher education institutions. Explore the prevalence of credits not transferring to in state institutions and to out of state institutions, as resources allow. For example, some dual enrollment courses are not transferring to institutions out of state, causing students to repeat courses.
27. For Further Consideration:
 - How does a student's behavior (i.e. changing majors, failure to seek advising, etc.) impact his/her ability to transfer successfully, versus shortfalls in the system that may hinder transfer?
 - How many degree-seeking students have started but not completed a degree within six years? Within this, identify the number of students who have completed an AGECE, but who have not transferred to a university. Consider the development of program delivery models and other tools and resources that would be effective in re-engaging these populations.

Advising

Often, a prominent concern heard from students is that they desire more advising opportunities to ensure that they are on the correct pathway to degree completion. A number of strategies and mechanisms should be considered to provide ongoing advising support to students to support the desired increase in the number of students transferring to and graduating from higher education institutions.

28. Large numbers of students are not seeing advisors. Advising tools are needed to support students, such as electronic student advising systems and aggressive marketing efforts between universities and community colleges, which will require a significant state and university investment. The Committee further recommends that the JCC or the P-20 Council develop a cost estimate to implement a virtual counseling model statewide, with links to the K-12 Education Career Action Plan, and the cost to require a student to meet with an advisor at least annually by October 2008.
29. Identify college/university students who are at risk of dropping out and implement proactive advising strategies to keep them engaged in their courses.
30. Consider establishing shared electronic enrollment systems and implementing aggressive student tracking of those seeking degrees at the community college and university levels.
31. Retain students in higher education by annually recognizing student accomplishments and identifying pathways that students can pursue. Some strategies may include the reverse transfer of credits for a student to obtain an associate's degree, annual letters to students communicating their progress and pathways to completion, and through other mechanisms. Direct the Arizona Academic Advising Articulation Task Force to identify these strategies and a statewide plan of action by January 2009 to implement this recommendation. As a part of their work, APASC, with support from its Academic Advising Articulation Task Force, should identify any data reporting and sharing needs to facilitate this process.⁵
32. Offer support to first generation students and minority students to increase their persistence and graduation rates, including peer mentors, increased advising, tutoring if needed, specialized living and learning environments, among other options. Specifically, APASC, with support from its Academic Advising Articulation Task Force should identify best practices to address the needs of these students by June 2009.⁶

^{5,6} If APASC's ATF structure does not enable this type of analysis in this time frame, the P-20 Council recommends assigning this work to an existing entity or creating a new entity to do the work.

Data

Important to every policy decision is access to relevant and accurate data. Currently, no longitudinal data system exists for the state's public higher education institutions, which not only creates issues in collecting and reporting data, but also in tracking students from K-12 through postsecondary institutions and into the workplace.

33. There is a significant need for a longitudinal database for higher education that links all the public higher education institutions and the state's K-12 Arizona Education Data Warehouse to improve strategic planning efforts and the performance of the P-20 education system. The P-20 Council's Data and Graduation Committee develop a formal recommendation regarding this database, including the identification of a neutral place to house the database and sufficient funds to operate the database. The expanded role of the ASSIST database and the National Student Data Clearinghouse should be considered in this regard.
34. Link the Arizona Department of Education's Education Career Action Plan (ECAP) system to postsecondary personalized learning plan models (i.e. E-Advisor), <http://aztransfer.com/>, the Arizona Universities Network (AZUN), the ASSIST database, and the workforce system.
35. Establish a statewide transfer rate between community colleges and universities.